

statesmanship on both sides for this to work, both sides to get a solution, and both sides to do it before it is too late.

The economic health of our country, the jobs of thousands of hard-working Americans, should not be mired in politics. It is well past the time—and I realize there is a House faction that is driving much of the decisions there. It is well past time for that faction in the House of Representatives to put politics aside and accept a long-term deficit reduction plan that does not force America's most vulnerable to shoulder the burden.

Just as many Vermont families are forced to make difficult financial decisions, Congress has to be open to considering all available options. We do this in my State of Vermont without gimmicks. We do not have any constitutional amendment on balanced budgets or anything such as that. We just balance the budget.

In that regard, I recall a Member who said: Let's have a constitutional amendment to balance the budget, knowing it would be years from now. But we actually had a balanced budget during the Clinton-Gore administration. Not a single Republican voted for it. Democrats voted for it, and we balanced the budget. We created a surplus. We started paying down the national debt, and created 24 million new jobs. Let's go back to those days. Forget the sloganeering. Forget the bumper sticker solutions. If things were that easy, it would have been done long before now. Start going back to doing what we are elected to do, what we are paid to do, and also what we are expected to do. Seek a solution, not a gimmick; not a deal, a solution that benefits all Americans.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

BUDGET COMPROMISE

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I don't need to tell anybody in this Chamber that our Nation is at a crossroads. We are at a crossroads. We have said for many months that we would be at this point, and now we are here. For months, we have said we will need to make tough choices and difficult decisions, and now we are at that very point when we need to make those tough choices and difficult decisions to rein in the debt and the deficit, and to put our fiscal house in order, even as we raise the debt ceiling.

This decision is difficult, tough, and excruciating for us. But it is hardly different than what American families are doing all around this country, and in Connecticut, because I have seen them and I have heard from them. So have

you in this Chamber—families who are struggling to make ends meet, to stay in their homes, to keep their families together, to make those cuts in their spending, which we are now required to do in this Chamber for the Nation.

It is a historic responsibility. We cannot keep kicking the can down the road. That is the analogy that has been drawn countless times in this Chamber, around the country, and by the President of the United States himself. The point is that the time for action is now—not delay or indecision, but real action that achieves a credible solution, which will demand compromise.

Compromise is the essence of the American Republic. It is the way our Nation was founded—through compromise, people coming together, bringing differences to the table and resolving them. Families in Connecticut and all across the country are making these kinds of choices every day when they buy a car, a house, decide to go to school, and even marriage requires compromise. Compromise is the essence of the American Republic and the way we do business in this Chamber, in this city, in State capitals around the country, and in places of business and all places where momentous decisions are made.

The American people expect nothing less of us than they do of themselves. There is no avoiding these tough choices and compromises now that will help us get our debt and deficit under control in a meaningful way.

The markets and the Nation need a real plan, not a short-term or stopgap effort. We must demonstrate that we are committed to finding a real solution. A short-term plan would not provide the kind of certainty and reliability the markets are desperately seeking at this point. A short-term or stopgap solution risks many of the same dire economic consequences that would be triggered by a default itself.

A financial Armageddon now, a catastrophic failure to raise the debt ceiling now, is exactly the same risk 6 months from now if we attempt to address our present issues through a short-term, stopgap measure. That financial Armageddon will affect every American family, every American small business, every American worker, and every job seeker. It is about jobs and economic recovery, because a failure to raise the debt ceiling will increase the cost of borrowing for every homeowner, every car buyer, every small business, and every person who has a credit card or otherwise seeks capital or credit in the market. By raising the cost of borrowing, it will simply crush our fragile economic recovery. It will be a job killer for this Nation. It is time now for compromise that will avoid those dire consequences for the American people.

The Reid proposal is a compromise in the best sense of the term. It is a solution that meets all the criteria our Republican friends have been insisting on for weeks. It does not include revenue

increases. It includes enough spending cuts to meet the amount of debt ceiling increase, dollar for dollar. It includes spending cuts that have been approved by many Republicans. Many of those spending cuts have been voted for.

Most important, from my standpoint, and from the standpoint of many colleagues on this side of the aisle, it does not make spending cuts on the backs of our seniors and our most vulnerable citizens. It avoids spending cuts to Medicare and Social Security that would imperil or diminish the benefits of those programs.

Let me tell you about this compromise, the Reid proposal. It is not transformational. It is not a grand bargain. It is incremental. It achieves progress step by step by step—the way progress has been made in this great Nation from its founding—step by step by step. It represents, as perhaps one of the columnists might have described it—in fact, this morning in the New York Times, David Brooks said there has been an outbreak of sanity. This proposal represents an outbreak of sanity in roiled waters of emotionalism, personality conflicts, political acrimony.

I hope my Republican colleagues will join us in seeking and ensuring stability for the markets and our fragile economic recovery, focusing on what concerns the American people now, and should, which is job growth. It is about jobs. We should get on with that historic path of creating jobs and enabling small businesses to borrow at rates they can afford, without hiking those interest rates as a result of a financial crisis that is truly avoidable. Failure would be the result of our own doing and our own failure in this Chamber.

We need to keep our economy moving in the right direction. I am hopeful, even confident, that we can come together with good will on both sides to overcome our differences and achieve that compromise that the Reid proposal represents.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. ROBERTS. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, so ordered.

The Senator from Kansas.

BUDGET CRISIS

Mr. ROBERTS. I thank the President. In making these remarks, I wish to emphasize that I am not trying to be presumptuous or disrespectful in any way to the Office of the Presidency or to the President personally. I wish to make that very clear. It is just that I am trying to think of an allegory to try to get my point across, and it

seemed to me this might be the way to do it.

We have our national unemployment rate at its highest level all year. We have the debt ceiling rapidly approaching the crisis everybody is talking about, and one would think we could do everything we could to support those industries very critical for job creation and economic development. There is one industry I am referring to in particular; that is, general aviation, and I was trying to think, how could I get my point across.

Since we had Speaker BOEHNER, Leader MCCONNELL, and the distinguished majority leader Senator REID conducting the very best they can to get a solution, perhaps the President, although his time is very valuable, could talk to somebody such as me, a ranking member of a committee, very worried about what is happening with our country, very worried about what we can do to get this debt ceiling fixed and we can get a long-term solution with regard to our entitlement programs. Perhaps he could actually invite me down maybe later—a lot later, certainly no cameras—in regard to a little basketball game of horse because everybody knows the President is a very good basketball player, as a matter of fact an extremely good basketball player. I am not going to make that claim, but there was a day on blind-side picks and a few other things I could do.

But I would emphasize to the President, bouncing the ball to him just on a bounce pass, and say: Your ball, Mr. President. The ball is in your court. I would like to emphasize, while we are playing, that basically he shouldn't be more concerned with increasing the debt ceiling past the 2012 elections than working on a long-term solution for solving the crisis. That would just be a suggestion. He would probably go to the left corner and sink a three about that time. I would want to emphasize to the President that he is singling out and he seems to be fixated on one specific industry that affects me and other specific industries as well, and I don't know how we pick and choose who should pay more taxes, who should pay more in terms of sacrifice, in terms of picking and choosing industries.

But at any rate, I would tell the President when I had the ball—I would probably be dribbling a lot or trying to, if he wasn't playing tough defense—and I would say: Mr. President, since negotiations started last month on raising the debt limit, you have, on multiple occasions over and over again, singled out the general aviation industry as an example of big business that serves only the wealthy and should contribute more to lowering the deficit. The only problem with this claim is it is not real, it is not factual, it is not correct. Consequently, I don't know whether it is in his head or maybe the writers who write that valuable information for him that general aviation only serves

millionaires and billionaires. Then, after I shot and missed it, I would say: Your ball again, Mr. President. I would say as he was trying to drive around me, rather successfully: The truth is, these aircraft actually serve as an essential business tool for a multitude of businesses of all shapes, all sizes, farmers, ranchers, manufacturers, business men and women, to access multiple offices and facilities that are spread across this great Nation. These folks are not fat cats. I would like the President to understand that managers and sales teams and technical experts, those are the people we are talking about who are in that corporate aircraft to be sure, but it is general aviation that serves the general public's welfare. They are often required to visit numerous offices in a short amount of time in regions of the United States that aren't served by large airports.

By that time, the President has scored a couple layups and two more jump shots and I have yet to hit a shot. But I will persevere. I would say to him as we were playing there on the court: Mr. President, in fact, 90 percent of our country's airports aren't even accessible by commercial aircraft—certainly, the Presiding Officer knows that—and I think they represent just those plain folks you have been talking about, just the folks who are in the middle, just the folks who are having a tough time, just the folks who have been laid off.

Then we have a paradox of enormous irony where, in the stimulus bill, there was a tax incentive for general aviation that helped some of those folks get those jobs back and it is that which you are attacking, which is your own suggestion or at least that of the majority in the Senate.

General aviation employs 1.2 million workers and annually contributes \$150 billion to the U.S. economy. That is a mouthful. By that time, the President has probably stolen the ball and scored another layup. Playing horse, we have five. I would probably ask him to play 10 or spot me 10.

Just last year, I would point out to the President, general aviation delivered 1,334 aircraft valued at over \$7.9 billion, over half attributed to exports, and that is what the President wants to achieve in his trade policy. I would tell him: Sir, your goal is doubling U.S. exports over the next 5 years. You don't do it by calling general aviation fat cats and singling out that industry for political blame.

Let's talk about tough times and tough going. Similar to every other business sector, general aviation has struggled during the recession. At that particular time, I would claim the President fouled me with a sharp elbow and I would take a free shot and I would say: Wait a minute. Unfortunately, this has resulted in layoffs among many high-skilled, high-paying jobs in this industry, and that is a two-shot foul, by the way, so I have a little

time. I would say: To help offset these job losses and incentivize the purchase of these aircraft, Democratic Members included a provision in the infamous stimulus bill to accelerate the depreciation schedules for a wide range of capital investments.

In Kansas, for Cessna Aircraft, accelerated depreciation was a key factor for Cessna and its suppliers being able to retain 1,000 jobs. Jobs held by folks whom I would tell the President are not fat cats. Again, they are just folks. They are doing the job to produce a product in the United States that we are very proud of, and we certainly don't want them to go to Mexico or to go to Canada. Some have already left.

So it came as a pretty big shock that you, Mr. President—and I am still on my second shot on the free shot. He is now asking me to quit talking and start shooting. But I would say: It comes as a pretty big shock to those workers that yourself and the Democratic Members in both Chambers would direct an attack on this industry.

This is true. I don't know how many Members of the Senate—not too many but, my word, I don't know how many Members of the House have heard that—corporate jet. Corporate jet. It has a ring to it, I guess. But at any rate, why would you repeal a tax provision that has contributed to job creation at a time of severe economic downturn; in fact, the one you actually suggested.

But there is more. There is more, Mr. President. Your ball. On top of this, budget negotiators are considering implementing user fees on general aviation as a way to generate revenue. We have been down that road. Let me be very clear. If user fees on general aviation are implemented, we could very well see the beginning of the end of this very critical industry.

With all that is going on—and I hate to remind you of this. By the way, I just scored a hook shot, Mr. President. It wasn't very pretty, but it rolled in. So it is about eight to one, something like that. At any rate, I am coming back.

When you mention corporate jets six times in two paragraphs in one speech and that is repeated on the various pundit shows on TV over and over again as a fat cat industry, that is most unfortunate.

I think we need to get serious about spending. I have thought so for some time, and I think every Member here does as well. We have our different ideas on how to do it. But I also believe it makes sense to consider those provisions that would actually have a measurable impact on reducing our more than \$14 trillion national debt.

I would ask as I bounce the ball back to the President and he heads for that left-hand shot in the corner again and I am hustling to try to keep up, I would ask: Do you have any idea, if you just taxed all general aviation, what that would amount to? Just changing

these schedules, these depreciation schedules for corporate jets; i.e., general aviation only contributes \$3 billion over 10 years. We borrow around \$40 billion every 10 days. Repealing this tax provision would close our national budget deficit for 1 hour—1 hour—1 hour in terms of a measurable effect. Yet we still pick on general aviation, calling them all fat cats.

Sadly, this isn't the first time we have seen this happen; that the Congress of the United States, a different President has singled out general aviation. In the 1990 budget deal, the majority created a new luxury excise tax that applied to boats and aircraft. The tax was repealed in 1993. Because, as the Democratic-controlled Senate Finance Committee report explained, during the recent recession the boat and aircraft industries have suffered job losses, increased unemployment. I guess those are plain folks, they qualify, not fat cats. It said:

The committee believes it is appropriate to eliminate the burden these taxes impose on the interests of fostering economic recovery in those and related industries.

That is a lot of words, especially when you are out playing horse in weather that is pretty hot. Today—maybe it is better today so maybe it would be a better deal. I couldn't agree more with that. We have been down this road before. I think it is unfortunate.

Last, before I watch him make his last shot and I go down to the T, at least on the court I hope I would have made my argument to the President that singling out general aviation as "fat cats" is simply not accurate, it is class warfare. That is a little tough. Maybe I wouldn't say that on the court, maybe sort of nudge him a little bit when I got underneath the bucket.

At any rate, it is going to take courage to put this country's fiscal house back in order. There is no question about that. But it is absolutely essential for us to do it in a responsible manner and not by scapegoating, not by singling out important sectors of industry that have long played a vital role in the economic development of both my home State of Kansas and our country as a whole. I would simply say: Your ball, your game, Mr. President, but let's not single out general aviation anymore.

It might have been the case if he were on a corporate jet with Kobe Bryant or somebody, maybe a Hollywood actor, maybe going to a fundraiser, maybe he got it in his head everybody who has a corporate jet, i.e., general aviation, as opposed to going from Kansas to North Dakota to check on some farm ground, that that is the case. I hope that is not the case anymore.

That is the end of the ball game but it is not the end of the debate. I hope we have a debate without singling out an industry. That is unfair and not accurate.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. KERRY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. KERRY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent I be permitted to proceed as in morning business for about 15 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ECONOMIC STEWARDSHIP

Mr. KERRY. Madam President, this is a dangerous time for our country. What amazes me, for the time I have been here and privileged to serve the citizens of Massachusetts for 27 years now, is that never have I seen a moment where the consequences of inaction can have as potentially damaging an effect on our country as the consequences may if we are downgraded in our debt—just downgraded, not even defaulting—yet some of our colleagues in the Congress, particularly on the other side of the aisle in the House, are, despite all the evidence, all of the judgments made by knowledgeable people—by economists, by business people, by outside observers, about the danger and inadequacy of what they are proposing—despite that, they are insisting, not as a matter of common sense or as a matter of logical economic policy but insisting as a matter of politics and ideology on holding the entire economy of our country hostage and be damned with the risks.

Notwithstanding what that may mean—for 401(k)s, for families, what that may mean for investments that are on the brink because of the fragility of the economy, notwithstanding any of the advice of people who deal with money on a daily basis in terms of investments, these people, many of them who have never served in public life in their lives, never been part of a compromise but have come here with one ideological purpose—these people are putting the entire Nation at risk.

There are a lot of people here, particularly here in the Senate on the other side of the aisle, who know this is dangerous and who know the risks we are taking and who know there are better alternatives. But because of the politics of the situation they are being locked in, not allowed to stand up and exercise—or at least unwilling at this point to stand up and exercise their judgment and, frankly, their responsibility as sworn to uphold the Constitution of the United States of America, to come here and do the business of our country.

The deadline for default may be just a week away but no one should have any illusion that what is happening

right now today is already hurting the economy of our country. It is already hurting our country. This is embarrassing for the Nation. It is embarrassing for the United States of America to be having such a dysfunctional display for everybody in the world to see that we who run around the world promoting democracy are unable to make our own democracy work right here at home. The fact is, all you have to do is read today's article in the Boston Globe with the headline "Uncertainty Has Massachusetts Firms Wary Of Hiring."

That is what is happening right now. This is already having a negative impact. Maybe that is what some of the people on the other side of the aisle in the House want. Maybe they want the economy to come down so they can win politically and point to the President and say: Oh, it is his fault we don't have the jobs, even though they are weakening the economy with their obstinacy and with their ideological rigidity.

Today's article says:

Still cautious from the last recession, many business owners worry that government leaders will be unable to reach an agreement, while others are concerned about exactly the opposite: that any agreement will invariably include spending cuts and weaken an already lackluster recovery.

This is no way to provide economic stewardship. Most important, it is no way to run a government. There are countless institutions that rely on the United States, for us to go out and help other nations to be able to recover economically. I met yesterday with the Finance Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of Greece. Greece is taking enormous steps right now to try to bring its debt down and all of the euro zone has joined in that effort, and Italy and Spain are likewise at risk in their economies. But the IMF is a critical component of that recovery and the United States is a critical component of the IMF efforts and we have a significant amount of our capital at risk in the IMF. What happens there is important to what happens here, but this place is not behaving as though there is that interconnectedness. Let me tell you what I hear from a lot of smart people—smarter than I am—about the economics. I can listen to them, and I can tell they are deadly serious when they say we are playing with fire with respect to the Greek recovery and with respect to Italy and Spain and the rest of Europe. If they start to go down, then we have a cascade, and it begins to have a greater impact on the United States of America. That is what is at risk in this dangerous game of political chicken that is being played by people of such ideological rigidity that they are unwilling to even compromise.

I heard an interview yesterday with one Senator and a television commentator of one of the cable shows who asked him repeatedly: What are you willing to compromise on? In the end, it became clear he was not willing to